

Successes of collectivisation

- By 1940 nearly all farms had been collectivised. There were 240,000 collective farms instead of 25 million smallholdings.
- The Kulaks had been eliminated.
- More grain was procured by the state. This enabled the government to pay for the machinery needed for industrialisation and to feed the workers in the cities (although rationing was enforced).
- Farming methods were modernised e.g. more tractors and other farm machinery, fertilisers etc. Eventually more grain was produced but it was only in 1937 that grain production reached 1928 levels.
- The Communists had established political control over the countryside. There were agents of the secret police in the Machine Tractor Stations.
- Stalin reluctantly allowed the peasants to retain small private plots. These were very productive (50% of vegetables and 70% of milk came from them).
- It could be claimed that collectivisation had achieved the Marxist aim of state ownership of land and equal treatment of all collective farm members.

Collectivisation

- Food production had to be increased because it was vital to increase the food supplies to workers in the towns and cities or the Five-year plans would not succeed.
- Millions of peasants hid food away and didn't support the Communists.
- They were often poor and had no time-saving equipment.
- Many richer peasants (Kulaks) were influential in the villages, which annoyed the local Communist Party secretaries.
- In 1929, Stalin began to collectivise all farms.
- Peasants were forced to collectivise - they could keep small plots of land for their own fruits, vegetables and animals. There would now be extra machinery for use on larger farms.

The Five-year Plans 1

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Failures of collectivisation

- Stalin had eliminated the most productive farmers (kulaks) which inevitably damaged agricultural production. The kulaks suffered appallingly and many died as a result of deportation.
- Most of the peasants hated collectivisation and in protest destroyed their animals. The result was a catastrophic drop in the number of livestock (Only in the 1950's did numbers recover). The diet of many Russians was almost meatless.
- The fall in grain production and the doubling of state procurement led to a (state-induced) dreadful famine which killed between 5 and 7 million people in 1932-3.
- Soviet agriculture stagnated for decades. Many peasants were deeply resentful of the new collective farms and had little incentive to work hard. Consequently they paid more attention to their private plots.

- In 1928, Stalin decided to industrialise the USSR as quickly as possible. He announced a series of Five Year Plans.
- A state planning commission called Gosplan set targets for achievement.
- Each industry was set a national target.
- Each industry was set targets for each region.
- Each region set a target for each factory.
- Each factory set a target for each shift.
- Each shift set a target for each worker.

Industrialisation 1

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The Five-year Plans 2

- The First Five Year Plan (1928 - 1932) concentrated on heavy industry: coal, steel, railways, oil, electricity. The actual production figures were lower than the targets but remarkable growth was achieved. Factories were built beyond the Ural Mountains - so western invaders couldn't reach them easily. The number of industrial workers doubled.
- The Second Five Year Plan (1933 - 1937) concentrated on heavy industry, but also on transport (new roads, railways, canals and the Moscow underground). Mining was developed in new areas. Some of the targets were achieved, but at this time the USSR was reacting to the threat that came from the rise of Hitler and Nazi Germany. Therefore, the armaments industry developed the most.
- The Third Five Year Plan (1938) concentrated on rearmament for WW2. The Plan was abandoned when Germany invaded.

Aims

- To achieve socialism/communism. This could only happen in a heavily industrialised society with a very large working class. Living standards would improve and the state would control all the means of production.
- Stalin was very concerned about the Soviet Union's security. By industrialising very rapidly the Soviet Union could acquire the armaments to equip the Red Army against the threat posed by hostile capitalist powers.

Successes

- The main focus was on heavy industry: iron, steel, coal, oil and electricity. The three Five-Year plans saw a huge expansion of production in these sectors.
- The Soviet Union established a huge engineering capacity which enabled it to successfully equip the Red Army which emerged victorious from the ultimate test when Nazi Germany invaded in 1941. Machinery such as tractors and fertilisers were produced for use on the collective farms.

- There was a huge amount of inefficiency, waste and duplication because industrialisation was done at breakneck speed. In reality centralised planning was chaotic. Red tape (bureaucracy) often stifled enterprise and worker productivity. The quality of goods was often poor e.g. American tyres lasted ten times longer than Soviet ones which used much less rubber.
- The extremely high and unrealistic production targets were not usually met. Official Soviet production figures are notoriously unreliable because it was in Stalin's interests to exaggerate the achievements of industrialisation.
- The human cost was very high. The standard of living for most workers was very low. Consumer goods were very scarce because they received a low priority. Real wages declined for the first part of the period and there was massive overcrowding, in the cities because of the influx of the peasants (20 million!) from the countryside.

Failures

Industrialisation 3

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Industrialisation 2

Successes (continued)

- Communications were improved and resources from the most inhospitable parts of the Soviet Union began to be exploited, often using slave labour. For example the huge industrial centre at Magnitogorsk in the Urals was created from scratch.
- There was almost no unemployment in the Soviet Union unlike most of the major Western powers which were suffering from the Great Depression.
- By 1940 the Soviet Union was second only to America in its manufacturing output, having overtaken Germany and GB.
- Capitalism (NEP) was ended in Russia. All industrial enterprises were under state control.
- There was a massive expansion of the working class. Many of them became well educated and some benefited from improved wages (like the Stakhanovisms). Many women joined the workforce. The huge propaganda campaign was important in winning over the loyalty of the new working class.

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Failures (continued)

- There was a system of draconian punishments for workers such as internal passports and many injuries and deaths because of safety failures. Those doing forced labour suffered the most. For example 100,000 died building the Belomor Canal (too narrow, too shallow and it froze over for 6 months of the year).
- Socialism/communism was supposed to bring about a more equal society but industrialisation increased the differences in wealth between a small and privileged elite and the mass of the workers who suffered a low standard of living.

Conclusion

Overall Stalin achieved his goal of creating an advanced and heavily industrialised socialist state which successfully withstood the Nazi onslaught in the period 1941-45. However, while Stalin enjoyed the prestige of these achievements it was the Russian people who suffered the consequences of his policies.